



STATE OF IOWA

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Ticket to Hope Provides Free Counseling to Those Affected by 2008 Natural Disasters

DES MOINES, Iowa—The Iowa Department of Human Services has launched the Ticket to Hope program offering no-cost professional mental health counseling to cope with lingering stress for survivors of last year's natural disasters.

The program is aimed at people who are uninsured, whose insurance does not cover mental health benefits, or who have exhausted the mental health service provisions of their insurance, according to Bill Gardam, administrator of the Mental Health and Disability Services division of the DHS.

"There are many Iowans who could benefit from professional assistance to process the aftermath of the 2008 disasters and help them move forward," Gardam said.

He said that in any given disaster, loss and trauma will directly affect many people. In addition, some people are emotionally impacted simply by being a part of the affected community. Even individuals who experience a disaster "second hand" through exposure to extensive media coverage can be affected, he said.

Most disaster survivors function well under the stresses of every day life, but with the added stress of disaster, many will show signs of emotional and psychological strain. If these normal reactions to an abnormal event become more severe as time passes, people should seek help from a mental health professional.

"Ticket to Hope will help people by offering multiple counseling sessions to individuals and family at no cost. For those who do not have benefits to cover counseling sessions, this program is invaluable in helping them regain a sense of control over their lives," Gardam said.

Access to Ticket to Hope services is available through the Iowa Concern Hotline at 800-447-1985. The program is offered through a grant from the U.S. Department Health and Human Services and is managed by the DHS. Services will be available through June 2010.

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